

THE MERRY WIDOW

By FRANK H. MELOON

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We all called her the Merry Widow. She said she came from Yaleville, Wis., where she had buried her husband—a big, surly brute, as nearly as we could guess—12 months before her arrival in New York. None of us happened to know just where Yaleville, Wis., was, or what kind of town it was, but I think that each of us pictured it in his own way, as a deserted village sort of place. And why? Just because the Merry Widow was no longer in and of it.

There was nothing stuck up about the Merry Widow. Her blue eyes flashed as expressively and as appreciatively on me, who seldom had a cent unless because of a lucky strike in what I won't say, as on Jake Mann, who ran the hotel and who was supposed to be independently rich and as widow-proof as a man down with rheumatic fever. The blue eyes, in fact, appeared to flash with equal favor on all of us—the Fourteen club, who gathered to play forty-fives and discuss affairs of the old country on leisure nights.

Jake Mann attracted us because of his ardent patriotism and desire for the overthrow of oppressive governments, monarchical or otherwise. Big, good-natured Jake, always ready to assist the struggling or raise the fallen. God bless him! He has never lost a dollar through any of the Fourteen club, and it's myself that's after thinking he never will. But we hardly reckoned him in the race for the heart and hand of the Merry Widow. Think of it! Fourteen bachelors and all of us willing to surrender single blessedness at a moment's notice for her sake! The Merry Widow did not come alone. An aunt, a creature full of frowns and sharp angles, was with her, watching her every movement as closely as if the Merry Widow were a little child and not able to take care of herself at all. If, in bidding her adieu

ing. Then one day came the announcement of sad news. She was going back to Yaleville, Wis. She had had enough of New York. If she stayed any longer, she would want to stay forever.

That filled us all with the wildest hopes, and there wasn't a man of the Fourteen but felt he just must ask her to stay on Yaleville. But where was the chance to be found? Pickles stuck to the Merry Widow like a dock-burr. She followed her upstairs and she trotted after her down. Blissfully unconscious, as it seemed, of our adoration, the widow made no attempt to rid herself of the incubus. The one consolation attending the Merry Widow's proposed departure would be that she would take Pickles along with her.

That night the Merry Widow was at her best. Never had her blue eyes flashed with so much happiness. We felt actually jealous of Yaleville, Wis. Was it possible she was glad she was going home? No, that could not be. There must be some other reason for the Merry Widow's glee. Could it chance she had left a lover behind her in the far away town? Not likely, because all the mail which had come to her had been addressed in a feminine hand. So much we forced Jake to tell us to set our minds at rest on that score.

Never was there the like of that night in Jake Mann's. Pickles played the piano tuned for the occasion, and the Merry Widow sang "Believe Me," "The Rocky Road to Dublin" and all the old songs it does our heart good to hear. Jake wanted to send champagne around, but the old aunt objected. She said that as chaperone she could stand for nothing stronger than coffee. The Merry Widow hesitated a moment, then pointingly assented, but we all felt that the yoke of propriety in this instance weighed heavily on her. Still, we would have been gladly willing for her sake to drink dishwater.

Pickles, too, could certainly touch up the piano. I think Jake felt a little bit ashamed of certain things he had said, when the old lady behind her back, when she struck up the tune of "Watch on Rhine," while the Merry Widow announced she would sing some verses her aunt had composed on Jake Mann and German hospitality in general.

Following this, Pickles announced that as it was getting late, she would go to bed, but her niece, she added, could stay up a while longer. The Merry Widow's blue eyes included us all in their flash of appreciation, yet every man felt it was intended most particularly for himself.

The Merry Widow stayed. We conversed with her by turns. Part of the conversation was aloud, part whispered. The widow was dazzling, but no man dared overstep his limit. We all said our little say, each after his own fashion, and the widow was game to the finish. At the stroke of 11, she begged to be excused for the night. Strange to say, not one of us adjourned to the bar after she had gone.

For a while we indulged in our usual game of forty-fives, then one by one the members of the Fourteen club stole away. I know that I left, ostensibly for my room, but in reality to keep a date with the Merry Widow. It was only a five-minute chat in the hallway, but I held her in my arms, kissed her again and again, saw the lovelight burning in her eyes of blue, interchanged vows of eternal fidelity and went my way.

The next morning at breakfast time, the Merry Widow and Pickles were still in their rooms, but Jake Mann, excusing their absence, called on us to congratulate him. He announced his engagement to the Merry Widow. Amid the chorus of voices raised in surprised protest, I detected the note of anger. Otherwise I would have laughed at the preposterousness of the idea. Then, great heavens! you should have heard the rest of us claiming the honor! Did the Merry Widow propose to marry us all? Impossible.

I think I was the first to examine my roll. When flush, which was seldom, I usually carried about a thousand dollars. I breathed with relief as I felt it all there. But on opening the bill-book, I found only a wad of brown paper inside. I held it aloft. I shook it. We investigated in turn. Every man of us had been "stung." We rushed hastily upstairs. There was no sign that either the Merry Widow or Pickles had occupied the beds the previous night.

After all, I am not sure but what that five minutes with the Merry Widow was worth a thousand dollars. Jake Mann thinks his money was well spent. So far as I can find out, the other members of the Fourteen club are inclined to make the best of it. If there was such a place as Yaleville, Wis., I would certainly go there.



A Five-Minute Chat in the Hallway.

—and I often pretended to take trips into the country for that very purpose—I held her hand a second longer than stern propriety would allow (and what Irish lad could help it with the blue eyes of the Merry Widow looking into his own). I would see the vinegary countenance of the aunt peering at me over her shoulder. Pickles—that was what we called the aunt.

After it was all over, others confessed to the same experience. Sporty bunch, you ask? Well, we were going some most of the time. You may wonder why the aunt permitted the Merry Widow to settle down in the midst of us. It was as plain as day. The widow was used to having her pickles from "butting-in." And we all agreed that the aunt was a necessary accessory, only some of us used words both shorter and uglier.

The widow explained she had come to Jake Mann's because she had heard that those who foregathered there were strictly on the level. Even at the semi-swell hotels she couldn't be so sure of that as at Jake's. Jake's law was: Be square. And Jake enforced it much better than the statute laws are enforced in New York or anywhere else. The Merry Widow didn't pretend to have a fortune, but she said she wanted to see New York and had come east for that purpose. The Fourteen club took turns showing her.

Pickles always went along. In all fairness to Pickles, I'll admit she never made herself obnoxious except by her presence. But you felt her, like an air laden with malaria, always about you. The desire to talk to the Merry Widow alone was overpower-

PUT END TO AMBITION.

W. S. Gilbert's Early Choice of the Stage Nipped in the Bud.

At the early age of 15, according to the author of a recent biography of Sir W. S. Gilbert, the future dramatist showed his theatrical bias, to his own undoing.

Enraptured with a splendid performance of "The Corsican Brothers" at the Princess theater, then under the management of Charles Kean, young Gilbert packed up a few clothes in a handbag and actually succeeded in making an entrance to the theater, with a view to going on the stage. Greatly elated at receiving the message that Kean would see him in his room, the boy lost courage when he was face to face with the great actor. "So you would like to go on the stage?" said Kean.

"Yes, sir," replied Master Gilbert, trembling in every limb.

"What's your name?"

"The boy's imagination failed him at a critical moment in his life. 'Gilbert,' he faltered, seeking refuge in the truth.

"Gilbert, Gilbert," reiterated Kean, with a sharp glance at the embarrassed boy. "Are you the son of my old friend, William Gilbert?"

"Yes," Kean turned to an attendant. "See this young gentleman home," said he.—Youth's Companion.

Archbishop Bound to Service. The archbishop of Canterbury is required by ancient custom to prepare a plate of soup for the king, should his majesty at any time prefer a request for refreshment at the hands of the prelate.

Auto Racing Makes for Better Machines and Better Roads

By JOHN JACOB ASTOR.



Racing is sure to advance the automobile. It tends to produce the best material, to induce men to study out better machinery, to build better tires, to work out every technical problem.

Then there is another side to the question. Racing tends to better roads, and better roads are one of the best examples of advance in civilization. Without good roads a country cannot progress. They are the means of promoting trade and intercourse between far distant communities. And automobile racing helps to bring this about.

Unlike the aeroplane, the automobile seems today well nigh perfect up to a certain point. It is at this moment far ahead of the roads, especially in our country. We need better roads here in the United States. I don't mean for the sake of the automobiles alone, but for the sake of those who must necessarily use them to bring their products to market, whether it be the farmer or the manufacturer. A farmer can move his crops at much less cost for transportation on a good road than he must spend on a bad one. The automobilists don't ask for good roads for themselves alone, but for all their countrymen, whether they be farmers, manufacturers or simply travelers.

A good automobile has come down very much in price since the introduction of self-propelled vehicles. It will come down more in price, I think, as its use becomes more general and popular. I doubt, however, the prediction of those optimists who say that the time will come when an automobile will become as cheap as the ordinary vehicle, because it contains its own motive power, which is a fact to be considered.

Coat of Arms Easy to Get

By JAMES GRANT.

turn, possessed of four, who acknowledged eight, who owned 16, who must have had 32, who boasted of 64 parents—if you travel along on this ratio for 10 or 20 generations, you will find that the people of France, let us say, who are alive and active to-day, must necessarily have been related to all those French people who existed six or eight or ten hundred years ago.

One thing is incontrovertible on the simple figures of the matter, and that is that every white man, now alive in the world, can show a relationship with every white man who existed 2,500 years ago. On other words, no European could be held to be untruthful who should say that he was descended from, say, the first Brutus, for after a certain number of generations of blood admixture it matters very little in the descendant whether his claim be direct or collateral, as far as any of the characteristics, or even blood, of the original ancestor is concerned.

It is safe to say that direct ancestry cannot be traced in European families much beyond 15 generations; or, roughly, 500 years. The fable that King Edward is a lineal descendant of Hengist and Horsa is about as ridiculous as the statement that the Hapsburgs are directly sprung from Octavian, the nephew of Julius Caesar.

Evolution has clearly enough shown that animals and plants cease to propagate after having done so for a certain number of generations. This would be all the more so in generations of nobility or gentry which are almost invariably in-bred or exclusive. So it is clear that Mr. Rockefeller—who is far too wise, probably, to care one way or the other—may have a coat-of-arms of the Rockefeller family; but it is certain that he has derived neither blood nor characteristics from that highly respectable house.

The Greeks made few mistakes in their choice of words. They called the best man "aristos"—without reference to birth—and the best people "aristoi." It is pleasant to reflect that one may trace a close relationship to an "aristos," four or five generations back, and so construct a kind of nobility of blood and breeding upon the fact that he is transmitting his blood to us. To claim this over a score of generations is, however, a historical absurdity and an evolutionary impossibility.

Crop Reports and the Farmer

By CHARLES C. CLARK, Bureau of Statistics, U. S. Agricultural Dept.

information concerning crop conditions. They have traveling agents and correspondents (usually local buyers) throughout the United States, who keep them posted upon local conditions, and the large buyer or speculator in return gives these local buyers or correspondents information in regard to general conditions. Local buyers know the conditions of crops in their vicinity better, as a rule, than the average farmer, because it is their business to keep well informed. The farmer can not, by refusing to report for his locality the condition of crops, prevent buyers or speculators from knowing the condition of the crop. But without the government crop reports, which are made up largely by and for him, the farmer could not be sure of receiving any equivalent information from a disinterested source. He may know very well the condition of crops in his own locality, but must depend upon reports of others, in the newspapers or elsewhere, for the conditions of the entire crop. Prices in his home market are influenced, as a rule, more by the condition of the whole crop than by local conditions. The entire wheat crop of his county may be destroyed and prices be low, if the entire crop is large, or his county may have a "bumper" crop and prices be very high, if the entire crop is short.

Some private reports published in newspapers are honestly prepared and more or less reliable; on the other hand, misleading crop reports are frequently sent throughout the country to affect prices in the interest of speculators. The average farmer does not know which reports are reliable and which are sent out to mislead. The government reports enable farmers to keep themselves informed as to the general conditions, while the wide publicity given them checks and limits the evils of false reports sent out by persons interested in forcing the prices of products to figures not justified by actual conditions.

TOO MUCH FOR YANKEE.

English Munchausen Had Shade the Better of Fellow Romancer.

The Cape Cod man and the Londoner were traveling on the same train together from Liverpool to the capital.

"Yes," said the Yankee, "we do have considerable fog out our way. I've seen it so thick that the land-ladies of our summer boardin' houses could ladle it out and use it instead of whipped egg for the heavy part of the floupin' island."

"We've 'em, too, in London," said his traveling companion, "but our climate is too dirty to permit of our eatin' it. We burn so much soft coal, you see, the fog gets packed full of soot. The only thing we really can do with it is to cut it up into blocks and use it instead of peat when we want a quick fire."

And the Yankee took out the little American flag he wore in his button-hole and put it away in his wallet.—Judge.

A RUNNER-UP.



Mr. Asker—Do you find your new auto a good climber, Harry?

Harry—Well, it's not a speed marvel when it comes to running up hills, but say, old man, you just ought to see it run up a bill.

How's This?

We offer One Hundred Dollars Reward for any case of Catarrh that cannot be cured by Hall's Catarrh Cure. E. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, O. We, the undersigned, have known E. J. Cheney for the last 15 years, and believe him perfectly honorable in all business transactions and financially able to carry out any obligations made by him. WARD, KINNA & MARVIN, Wholesale Druggists, Toledo, O. Hall's Catarrh Cure is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. Testimonials sent free. Price 75 cents per bottle. Sold by all druggists. Take Hall's Family Cure for constipation.

Nuts.

One very great advantage which nuts possess over most foods is their absolute freedom from adulteration. When you buy nuts, you always know what you are getting. Of course, those bought in the shell are also absolutely clean. And what a beautiful source they come from! How delightful to picture the trees upon which they grow, on the outermost branches dancing in the sunbeams.—Good Health.

The extraordinary popularity of fine white goods this summer makes the choice of Starch a matter of great importance. Defiance Starch, being free from all injurious chemicals, is the only one which is safe to use on fine fabrics. Its great strength as a stiffener makes half the usual quantity of Starch necessary, with the result of perfect finish, equal to that when the goods were new.

By the Hurricane Route.

"He's long wanted to leave the country," says a Billville exchange, "but he never could afford the railroad fare, but just as he had given up all hope a hurricane came along and gave him and his house free transportation. It was providential and he pulled through at last."—Atlanta Constitution.

Rather Effeminate.

The Sauceman—I wonder what makes the kettle so happy. It hasn't stopped singing all day.

The Coffee Pot—Why, didn't you notice its new lid?—Puck.

If the energy that women expend in making fools of men could be concentrated—what's the use of speculating with impossible problems?

Walk home in almost any new shoes—They start comfortable. With every few steps they lose comfort. Try a pair of smart White House Shoes. Walk home, or anywhere—they start comfortable. Continue comfortable—and comfortable—stay graceful.

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FOR THE LADY OR THE AUTO.

Expressman—I don't know whether this comes here. The address is indistinct.

Housemaid—I guess it's all right. It's either a new tire for the auto, or a new hat for the missus!

Laundry work at home would be much more satisfactory if the right Starch were used. In order to get the desired stiffness, it is usually necessary to use so much starch that the beauty and fineness of the fabric is hidden behind a paste of varying thickness, which not only destroys the appearance, but also affects the wearing quality of the goods. This trouble can be entirely overcome by using Defiance Starch, as it can be applied much more thinly because of its greater strength than other makes.

POOR OLD BIRD.
Pop (looking up from the paper)—I see there's a new baby hippopotamus at the zoo. What are you laughing at, Johnnie?

Johnnie (who is almost as bright as he looks)—I was just laughin' to think of the stork carryin' a hippopotamus!—Exchange.

BONE OF CONTENTION.
"Death usually heals all family differences," said the old-fashioned philosopher.

"Yes," replied the shrewd observer, "but usually the reading of the will separates them again."—Detroit Free Press.

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cause irritation of the eyes. BETH'S EYE SALVE soothes and quickly relieves. All druggists or Howard Bros., Buffalo, N. Y.

Liberality does not consist in giving largely, but in giving wisely.—Jerome.

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When a man is short he usually has a long face.

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